1:Srinivas E-5 (1940-42)1952 AW5 Coorg AW5



songs it is the woman who takes the initiative in a love affair and seduces the man with whom she falls in love.

The general impression one gets from the folksongs is that women enjoyed much greater freedom in the past than they do today. It is probable that in the last 200 years Coorgs have orientated themselves more and more towards the patrilineal Kannadigas and moved away from the matrilineal Nāyars. This was accompanied by denying women active roles at the caste dances and festivals, and the home was seen more and more as their proper sphere of action.

But nowadays, under the influence of Western ideas, the Coorg woman is once again coming to the fore. Education is more widespread among Coorg women than among the women of other castes, including Brahmins. They are nurses, teachers, and doctors, and do not hesitate to live outside Coorg. The economic position of Coorgs and the fact that they marry comparatively late are some of the factors responsible for the greater spread of education among Coorg women. The greater ease with which Coorg women have 'emancipated' themselves is probably because they have not been as long under patriarchal ideas regarding womanhood as their sisters in the eastern part of the Peninsula.

## VII

Among Coorgs, as among other Indians, respect has to be shown to elders. When a Coorg meets an elder on a ritual occasion he has to salute the latter by bending the upper half of his body and touching the elder's feet thrice with both hands. After each touch the younger man takes his hands to his forehead, where he folds them together. The elder touches the bent head of the younger man with both hands and then brings them together at the chest or forehead. A woman elder is expected to take only her right hand to the right side of her forehead, but I have seen women acknowledge a salutation in exactly the same manner as men.

When he is saluted an elder usually utters a blessing like 'may you live long', or 'may you live happily'. But sometimes the blessing might be a long one, carrying a prayer to God and the ancestors to grant the younger person longevity, happiness, and 'eleven children, boys as well as girls'.

When two equals meet they salute each other merely by bringing

1:Srinivas E-5 (1940-42)1952 AW5 Coorg AW5

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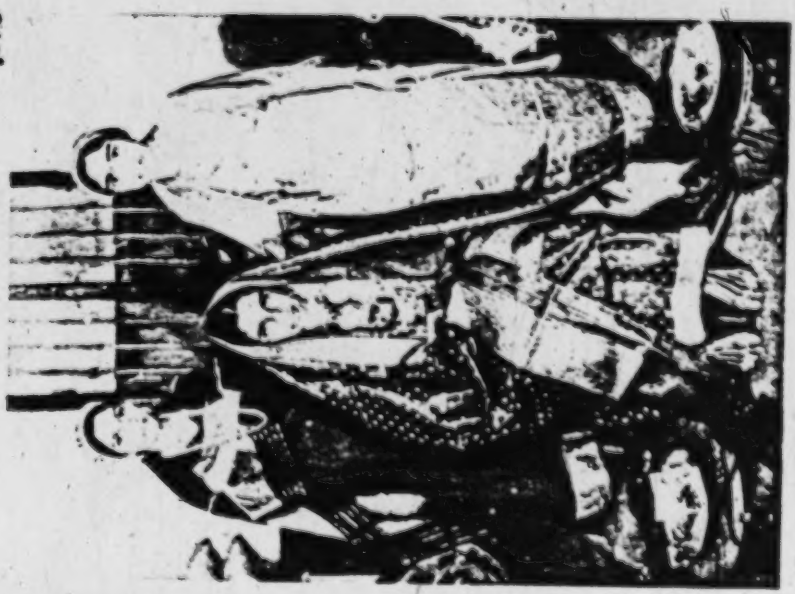

A BRIDE

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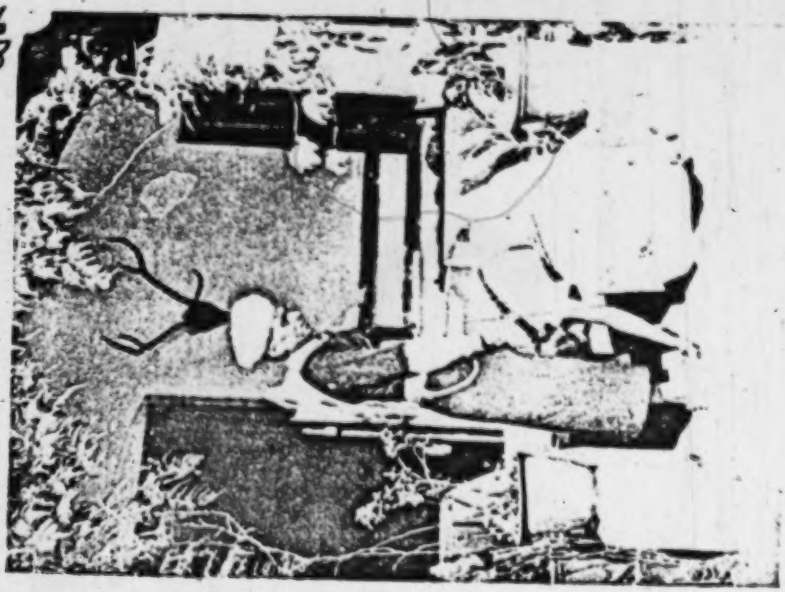

A GIRL SALUTES HER FATHER

[Facing p. 48]

1:Srinivas E-5 (1940-42)1952 AW5 Coorg AW5



their palms together at the chest, and one asks the other '*saukhya*?' (happy?), and the other replies '*saukhya*' (happy).

Shri K. J. Chengappa tells me that, over fifty years ago, when he was a boy, he had to go on a walk every evening with his male cousins and elders. The boys walked, with their arms folded across their chests, several yards behind the elders.[1] They took care to speak in a low tone and to avoid laughing aloud. Young people had to behave very circumspectly in the presence of their elders: they were forbidden, for instance, to cross or stretch their legs before an elder.

A senior, let alone an elder, has to be addressed by the appropriate kinship term. It shows disrespect to address him by name. Even when one meets a senior who is not related he is addressed by a suitable kinship term. For instance, a very old man is addressed as 'grandfather', whereas someone only a few years senior to the speaker is addressed as 'elder brother'. An elder usually addresses a younger person by name, or by some term like 'child'. Two people address each other by name only when they are approximately equal in age and when there is some familiarity between them.

There is an important exception to the rule that an elder may address a younger person by name: a woman may not address her husband's younger brother by name, even if the latter is her junior by many years. In such a case the ancient Coorg rule, 'even a seventy-year-old woman should salute a seven-year-old boy', applies. Leviratic unions are preferred in Coorg, and this means that a woman's husband's younger brother might one day be her husband. And a husband may not be addressed by name. A man's wife uses the honorific plural towards him, whereas he uses the singular towards her.

Relatives who are placed in a position of respect are not addressed by name, but by the suitable kinship term. This is because calling a person by name is not regarded as consistent with putting him in a position of respect. A woman is required to show respect to her husband and to his younger brother who is her potential husband. She calls him *bava* (brother-in-law).

Respect for seniority or age is so deep-rooted in Coorgs that whenever they want to place a person in a position of honour they endow him with artificial or social seniority. There is the classic

[1] Both the folding of the arms across the chest and walking behind the elders show the respect the younger people have for the elders.

1:Srinivas E-5 (1940-42)1952 AW5 Coorg AW5



# III

# THE RITUAL IDIOM OF COORGS

## (1) THE RITUAL COMPLEX OF *MANGALA*

### I

EVERY society has a body of ritual, and certain ritual acts forming part of the body of ritual repeat themselves constantly. Not only ritual acts, but also ritual complexes, which are wholes made up of several individual ritual acts, frequently repeat themselves. Several such ritual complexes and some individual ritual acts might be together knit into a still wider ritual whole which repeats itself occasionally.

Salutation is an individual ritual act. It might be of two kinds, either elaborate as that adopted by a young person towards an elder on a ritual occasion, or simple, like that prevailing between two equals. In the former case the younger person thrice touches the older man's feet with both hands, and after each touch he takes the hands to his forehead where he brings them together. In the simpler form of salutation which prevails between equals, each person folds the palms before his chest, and as he does this he moves his head slightly to indicate a bow. The folding of the palms and bowing of the head are the most important parts of the ritual act of salutation.

Salutation of the elaborate kind is only one of several ritual acts in the ritual complex of *mūrta* (*vide infra*), and *mūrta* is again part of *mangala*. Formerly there were several kinds of *mangalas* and the narrowing down of *mangala* to mean marriage exclusively is a fairly recent phenomenon.

Formerly *mangala* was performed to mark the attainment of social adulthood by a boy when his ears were ritually bored by the goldsmith. This *mangala*, the first to be performed for a boy, was called *hemmi kutti mangala*, or 'the *mangala* at which the ears are bored'. The wearing of ear-rings was symbolical of the attainment of social adulthood. One who was physiologically an adult, but who had not undergone the ear-boring *mangala*, did not count as an adult for ritual and social purposes.

1:Srinivas E-5 (1940-42)1952 AW5 Coorg AW5



Red colour seems to have greater ritual value than white, and silk greater ritual value than cotton. For instance, at a wedding, the ceiling of the sacred central hall is covered with white cloths, except for the part just above the bridal seat which is covered with red cloths. All the bride's clothes are of red silk, and according to the ancient marriage song the groom wore a red silk gown and red silk turban.

When a man (or woman) dies his relatives have to carry gifts of white cotton cloths to him. But the dead man's sisters' children, or dead woman's brothers' children, have to carry gifts of red silk cloths. Those who bring gifts of red silk cloths are considered to be closer relatives than those who bring white cotton cloths. It is those who bring red silk cloths who take part, along with the dead man's eldest son and widow, in the important pot-breaking rite (*koḍa kukkuva*) which ritually severs the dead man's connexion with his living relatives.

The ritual preference of silk to cotton is widespread all over peninsular India among Brahmins, and it is very likely that Coorgs borrowed the use of red silk from the Brahmins of the west coast. The use of red silk in ritual is not very clearly defined—at least it is not as clearly defined as the use of the white gown.

The turban is worn on very important auspicious occasions like a wedding. On less formal occasions a Coorg ties a scarf round his head. Both men and women tie a scarf round their heads out of doors. But no form of head-dress, turban, scarf, or cap, is worn inside the house. When a kinswoman comes into the house the hostess removes her scarf. Failure to do so would be an insult, as it would amount to treating the kinswoman as a stranger. Absence of head-dress indicates the intimacy that prevails among the members of a household. It is presumably for this reason that everyone, including the senior mourners, has to remove his scarf and sandals before the corpse. Such removal shows that the dead man and mourners are members of one household. They are kindred, and kinship is intimacy. When two people are able to appear before each other without scarves they are intimate, they are members of the same household. It is an expression of the solidarity prevalent between the two.

There is a great social and ritual elaboration of the distinction between a married woman and a widow. A married woman or *garati* is one whose first and only husband is alive. Remarried

1:Srinivas E-5 (1940-42)1952 AW5 Coorg AW5



While white rice is used in auspicious ritual, rice yellowed with turmeric is used in inauspicious ritual. At the very important funeral rite of 'breaking the pot', each of the mourners sprinkles a little rice, yellowed with turmeric, on the corpse before saluting it.

The ritual sprinkling of rice on objects and persons usually accompanies salutation. In *mūrta*, the sprinkling of rice occurs with salutation and with the giving of milk and money presents. All these rites affirm a bond which exists between the subject and all those who perform them to him. These are members of his kin-group, caste-group, and village. They constitute his community. These rites of solidarity which affirm the existence of a bond between the subject and the community serve also to stress the importance of the particular *mangala* the subject is undergoing.

It is entirely proper that rice and not any other grain or article should be used in the most common solidarity rite in Coorg. Even today rice has a very important place in the social and economic life of Coorgs, and formerly, before the introduction of coffee and oranges into Coorg, it was the most valuable crop.[1]

## XI

The ritual of giving milk to the subject follows the sprinkling of rice on him. This, like the other ritual acts mentioned earlier, is performed at every *mangala* including marriage. While the structure of every *mangala* is, broadly speaking, the same, there are minor differences between one *mangala* and another. The ritual giving of milk at marriage makes the meaning of ritual milk-giving particularly clear.

On the first day of marriage *mūrta* is performed separately for the bride and groom *in their respective homes*. The bride's relatives and the high-caste members of her village perform *mūrta* to her *in her house*, and the groom's relatives and members of his village perform *mūrta* to him *in his house*.

On the second day, the groom's relatives go in state to the bride's house, and the groom's relatives perform *mūrta* to the bride. For this purpose *they carry some of their own rice and milk with them*.

The bride's relatives perform *mūrta* to the groom and, finally,

[1] Among the Brahmins of south India the assembled priests and relatives bless the bridal pair by sprinkling on them rice yellowed with turmeric.

l: Srinivas E-5 (1940-42) 1952 AW5 Coorg AW5



764 placed in his mouth. A bachelor and a wicked man are both in a spiritually unsatisfactory condition, and it is believed that their ghosts are likely to trouble survivors. The bitter fruit is an appropriate symbol of his unsatisfactory spiritual condition, of the fact that he is a danger to the surviving relatives and others.

553 It may be recalled here that a gold coin is used in ritually feeding a child on the occasion of conferring a name on it. A gold (or silver) coin which is used in solidarity rites itself becomes a symbol of a satisfactory spiritual and ritual condition. It was seen that this happened to a much greater extent in the case of milk.

## XIII

782 The various forms of salutation prevalent among Coorgs have already been described. It is interesting to note that there is no difference between the mode of salutation adopted towards another Coorg and that adopted towards a deity. A deity might be saluted either by bowing the head and folding the palms at the chest, or by first of all prostrating oneself completely before the image and then getting up and bowing the head and folding the palms. The former mode is adopted normally towards the wall-lamp, while the latter is adopted at a famous temple, or towards the wall-lamp on a special occasion.

[171] The Coorg form of salutation is prevalent among Hindus all over India, and it is only one of several instances where Coorgs participate in a ritual idiom common to all Hindus.

576 Salutation brings into relief a particular aspect of solidarity rites: solidarity does not necessarily mean the equality of the persons participating in the particular solidarity rite. Conversely, inequality between the participants does not denote lack of solidarity. When a young Coorg salutes his father's elder brother he is not claiming to be his uncle's equal. The very act of salutation expresses that the junior is inferior to the senior: the former's head is bent and he touches the latter's feet with both hands. The junior's hands are later carried back to his forehead.

In fact, a junior who failed to show the respect due to a senior by not saluting him would be effecting a breach in the solidarity. Hostility would be the result. Everyone would say that such a youth did not know his place, that his elders had not brought him up properly, and so on.

2:Emeneau L-5 (1936-1937) 1938
AW5 Coorg AW5



with both hands then a little is sprinkled on the seated person successively at the joints of knees, elbows and shoulders, and finally on the head. Then she takes a small brass vessel (called kunḍi) with a long spout, which is filled with milk, puts the spout through the open front of the veil to the mouth of the person, who drinks a little. Then she puts some money contained in a small bag into the hand of the person, and nowadays at least sprinkles rice into his lap, though this is unnecessary. The groom or bride then bends forward and three times touches the feet of the mother, after each touch putting the joined hands to his or her forehead. During this salutation the mother puts both hands on the child's head in blessing and ends by joining her hands and bringing them to her forehead. The mother is followed by all female relatives in some approach to an order by seniority and by the female guests in turn, and each goes through the same ceremony, the only difference being that gifts are presented without being enclosed in a bag. Widows are not debarred from performing the ceremony. If the female is younger than the bride or groom, the salutation made by touching the feet is performed by the guest and not by the bride or groom. After the women have finished, the men do the same thing, the first being the father, or if he is dead, the eldest male member of the sib, followed by the other male members of the sib in some approach to order by seniority and by other relatives and the male guests. The bride or groom is then conducted from the nellaki or from outside the house to his or her own room, and all the relatives and guests proceed to feast, first the men, then the women, and finally the servants of the house (who belong to the Holeya [poleyĕ] caste).

After the feast the guests are dismissed with the usual salutations (generally an abbreviated form of the salutation described above). Somewhat more formality attends the departure of the male members of the sib to which the mother of the bride or groom respectively originally belonged. They are conducted with music to the small pasture near the house and are seated there on mats. They are given betel and such light refreshments as sweets. Then a Coorg sword (odikati) is offered to the eldest member of this sib with an invitation to cut down three plantain stems that have been fixed in the earth. Since each stem is nearly a foot thick and cutting each across with one slanting blow is a matter of strength and knack, he usually hands the sword to some younger member of his party who cuts them. It is said to be mark of respect to offer the sword, and likewise a matter of honour to cut the stems cleanly. At present the whole affair is treated rather jestingly and it is said that foreign bodies are inserted into the stems to make the stroke a more difficult matter. The sword is a weighty and well-balanced weapon and those stems that I have seen after they were cut had been neatly and accurately severed with one blow.

585 gossip, which is now and then broken by the noisy band of musicians.
574 Meanwhile, the bride and bridegroom are bathed, he is dressed in his new
292 kuppasam (coat) with a long red cotton or silk sash round his waist and
[301] his friends fasten into it the new pichathi, a present from his father,
[405] together with a watch, and put jewelled gold rings on his fingers and a carefully tied turban in the approved Coorg fashion. A bright coloured handkerchief thrown over his shoulder completes his dress. The bride who is fully decked is left to the care of her friends.

585 In the bridegroom's house the wedding party proceed to the kaymada,
[782] carrying a light which had been kindled at the sacred house lamp, and
[354] ignite an earthen lamp there and invoke the blessings of the ancestors. On returning to the house the principal members of the family enter first into the inner hall, and the younger men follow and offer their customary salutations. At the auspicious hour, the bridegroom seeks the permission of the master of the house, and the elders to seat himself on the low three-legged stool kept in readiness and placed upon a carpet between two lighted lamps. These lamps trimmed with many wicks stand in metal dishes filled with rice by the side of which is a spouted brass vessel with milk. On the bridegroom being seated, the master of the house takes a handful of rice and
585 strews it over his head and shoulders uttering the words, "Live well; and
431 prosper well by God's favour", gives him a sip of milk, and drops a piece of money or other present in his lap, and passes on. Four men closely related to him do likewise. Then five of the nearest female relations
● [576] including the mistress of the house repeat the same formalities. Then the guests, male and female, do the same. Old people only touch the bridegroom's shoulder, those of equal age shake hands, while those below touch his feet as a mark of respect. As the presents accumulate, they are taken
[589] care of by a friend who sits near him and watches what and by whom they
[799] are given. Widowers and widows do not take part in the proceedings because they are unlucky.

585 The same ceremony is gone through in the bride's house at about the same time, but women have precedence over men. After this ceremony, the bridegroom rises and takes his meal with a group of twelve of the nearest relations (groomsmen) and the Aruva. The guests who are
[674] invited are sumptuously fed in the leafy shed put up for the occasion.
[533] Various kinds of liquor are served. During and after feasting, the music makes a discordant and deafening noise.

After feasting, the bridegroom's party go to the bride's house, which is generally some miles away. On such occasions a Coorg bridegroom, mounted on a pony, dismounts at the gate of the bride's residence which he approaches barefooted. When he has advanced

3:Iyer E-5 (no date) 1948 AW's Coorg AW5



585 three pebbles which he binds to the hem of her garment. This is a token of sealing her right to her husband's property. The bridegroom then takes the bride by the hand and leads her out of the house. This act of possession forms the principal part of the ceremony.

[576] As a mark of respect, he makes his obeisance to those assembled by touching their feet. In like manner, the wife fetches a pot of water from the well to the kitchen and carries a basket of manure to the nearest field and then returns to her room to indicate her willingness to share in the labours of the house. The Aruva then takes the bridegroom to the room [551] of his wife, and thenceforth, while she remains in his house as his wife, [583] she bears a new name, but will always be called by a familiar one under the parental roof. The married daughter receives from her parents a certain dowry and a good bed, but thenceforth she has no claim on the family property.

585 In bygone days, there was a custom of so called cloth marriage. Kittel 198 writes that a man gave a cloth to a girl, and she, accepting it, became his wife without any further ceremonies. He might dismiss her at any time [586] without being under the least obligation of providing either for her or the children born during connection. The custom was abolished by one of the [643] Lingayat Rajas, who being unable to obtain as many girls for his harem as he wished from wanton selfishness put a stop to it.

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brunt of the labour on the farm. The men plough the fields, transplant, and reap the rice. The women carry the manure, pluck weeds and clean the paddy. The men do no menial work. They leave that to women and servants, and enjoy a dignified repose chewing betel and gossiping. Some are expert tailors. Others with gun on shoulder wander through the jungle in search of game.

The Coorgs are noted for their hospitality and they enjoy visits from friends and relations. Should a male guest arrive, the men of the house meet him at the *kayale* and exchange greetings. The method of doing so is by both sexes alike and is very charming. The salutant being always the younger, stoops down, and touches the feet of the other who rests his head on the person concerned and blesses him. Meanwhile, the cook has spread a mat or carpet on the verandah bench, where he rests after washing his feet. He is then served with a chew, and later on with a meal, after which is discussed the special business of his visit. On his return, he pays his parting salutation in the above manner to the old men and women of the house, and the young men accompany him for some distance and take leave of him in the same manner.

When a female guest arrives, the cook or any other woman of the household meets her with a vessel of water and after saluting takes the kerchief from the guest's head and conducts her into the inner hall where she is received by the women, who enter into a free and hearty flow of conversation without any formalities. On leaving the house, the guest's kerchief is returned to her and an old man of the house with one or two women accompany her some distance. These visits of women are never made without the knowledge of their husbands, and they are always accompanied by some old man or female servant.

### Dress

The principal dress of a Coorg consists of a long coat of dark coloured cloth open in front and reaching below the knees. The sleeves end below the elbow and show the arms of a white shirt which is generally of the English pattern. This is folded across and confined at the waist by a red or blue girdle wound several times round and round, and knotted at the left front. On the right front, the Coorg short knife is stuck to the girdle having an ivory or silver handle, and fastened with silver chains. The large broad-bladed waist knife (*odikathi*) is very rarely worn. Its place is at the back, where it is carried in a brass clasp with its point directed towards the left shoulder. Like the kukri of the Gurkhas, it was a formidable weapon in hand-to-hand fighting. It is now used as a test of skill and strength on festive occasions, as when a bridegroom is expected to cut through the trunk of a plantain tree at one stroke. Their head-dress is a red kerchief or the beauti-

4: Richter M, G-5 (ca. 1856-1870) 1870 AW5 Coorg AW5



upon as a great honour and on festive occasions they are frequently invited. Then great efforts are made to do honour to their guest, and in the more civilized houses a breakfast in almost English fashion is served on crockery and with knives and forks. But perhaps those receptions are more enjoyable where one comes unexpectedly and has to put up with little inconveniences which draw forth from the kind host all the greater concern for the comfort of his guest. At the unexpected arrival of a European visitor there is at once a great commotion amongst the fair Codagitis. Clean dresses are donned, ornaments put on and there is a running to and fro within the house. Soon the crackling of fire is heard and the aroma of roasted coffee indicates the coming treat. The coffee is brought in a spouted brass vessel or in a tumbler; it is highly sweetened, has also a bytaste of red pepper, as the coffee beans were broken in the mortar that serves for pounding spices, but you cannot resist to gratify the importunity of your kind host. To leave a Coorg house without having partaken of any offered refreshment, be it only a sip of milk or an orange, would be a grave offence against Coorg etiquette.

It has been said that "the Coorg women do not exercise the domestic virtue of cleanliness." Considering the nature of the work that falls to their share, it cannot be expected, that they should always appear in festive costume; but they bathe frequently and whenever they are seen in public the women are remarkable for their clean and tidy appearance. Coorg children show much affection for their parents and relations, and the little ones of whom there is generally a goodly number are great pets of the house. The visiting stranger is the object of their wonder, and if he succeeds to gain their confidence, he will be liked all the better by the whole family. The bearing of the young in the presence of the old is decorous, the latter being greeted by every junior member of

4: Richter M, G-5 (ca. 1856-1870) 1870 AW5 Coorg AW5



the house or by a visiting neighbour whether male or female with great respect. The young man lays aside whatever burdens his hands, puts off his shoes and with folded hands first raised to the forehead, bows down and touches the feet of his senior, who lays his hand on the young man's head pronouncing a blessing, when the youth rises and repeats the ceremony to others.

The Coorgs are a hardy race and bear with fortitude a great deal of hardship, especially during the monsoon, whilst engaged with their rice cultivation. Exposed to wet and cold and often prostrate with fever, they soon regain their strength and old men and women of 70 or 80 years are not uncommon amongst them.

In the times of their Rajahs, during their wars with the Mysoreans and Malabars and in their marauding expeditions the Coorgs proved themselves brave soldiers and were dreaded for their fierce intrepidity; but their strength lay especially in their mountain fastnesses and behind the shelter of their native woods and the formidable breastworks extending for miles along the crests of hills. Since they have come under the rule of the British Government their warlike spirit has found no scope; but they are still a brave and manly race, who in time of need would doubtless stand by their new rulers with devoted loyalty. At the hunt of the tiger, the bison or the elephant no true Coorg shirks the dangerous sport; but with nerve and coolness and wary cunning he will dodge the advancing beast and with keen eye and steady hand fire at him at close quarters.

The intellectual and moral faculties of the Coorgs have for ages been neglected, and consequently up to the present day they are both ignorant and superstitious. The worship of demons and of departed spirits has usurped among them the worship of God. Charms and sorceries abound all over the country. Disease among men and cattle is readily ascribed to the Curses and witchcraft of enemies.

4: Richter M, G-5 (ca. 1856-1870) 1870 AW5 Coorg AW5



others, of equal value, connected with Panje, Belláre and the Bantwál river, in the province of Canara, be ceded to him.

"Under this arrangement, he will have nearly 24,000 canterai pagodas per annum, which is about the value of the sum which the Company have annually saved by his frobearing to demand payment of the money due to him: he will have two districts in Canara to which he conceived he had a claim and certain other districts in the same province, connecting him with the Bantwál river, of the same value with districts in Mysore, which he is desirous to possess, but which, under existing circumstances, it is not possible to grant him."

Vírarája did not consider himself well treated and was mortified by the withdrawal of the Resident, Capt. Mahoney, and the request addressed to him, that he should for the future put himself in correspondence with Col. Close, the Resident at Seringapatam, who does not seem to have ingratiated himself with the Rájah, as may be seen from the following letters:

Seringapatam, 16th November 1799.

Col. WARREN CLOSE

To

THE RÁJAH OF COORG.

"Lord Mornington has transferred me to Seringapatam as Commissioner of Mysore, of which *you** may be aware. A report reaches me from the Manjerabad frontier, that five days after the fall of Seringapatam your people have made a predatory incursion into the Maharájadurga district and plundered of 17 villages women and children, cows and calves, gold and silver, rice and seed grain, and carried the spoil beyond the frontier. I enclose a list of the plundered articles.

[596]

* The word used for "you" in the original, is the uncourteous Canarese form, in which no person of rank is addressed. This was very likely intentionally done by the Brahmun writer, but unknown to Col. Close.

[Errata: This should read "forbearing." See Corrigenda, Cat. 116, p. 493 -- Analyst]